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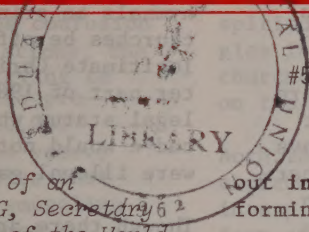
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HOUSE CHURCHES IN CHINA

The following is a summary of an address by Mr. Raymond FUNG, Secretary for Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches. Mr. Fung spoke on Oct. 29th at the Kyobun Kwan, Tokyo. Before going to Geneva in Nov. 1981, Mr. Fung was Secretary for Mission with the Hong Kong Christian Council.

House churches in China is a subject we have heard much about but it is also a subject about which we know very little. We do know that worship in homes is a practice found in the New Testament so the house churches in China are carrying on an old practice.

A preliminary point needs to be made that the organized church is not immortal--it will not necessarily continue to exist. In China the early Nestorian church disappeared. Also evidence of Roman Catholic attempts to establish churches in the 14th and 16th centuries is found only in the form of relics. In looking back over the last thirty years in China we see God's graciousness in keeping his witness alive in China because there is no doubt this witness has been kept alive as Christians worshipped and prayed together in homes.

House churches became known outside China in 1966 when public churches were closed, Bibles confiscated, and professional church workers were sent to farms and factories along with others of the teaching professions. However, in actual fact, house churches started in 1952 when the new government ordered a reduction in the number of churches in each city and instructed the churches in each city to worship together. As various mainline congregations united there were more pastors than congregations so some of the pastors went

out into the villages and countryside forming worshipping groups in homes.

Some Christian student groups, feeling that they needed to become churches with sacraments rather than continue as only student groups, became another source of the house churches.

Some of the house churches are related to the "Little Flock", an indigenous Christian Chinese community with a lay ministry that practices community accountability. The Little Flock, possibly better known outside China as the "Watchman League" or the "Witness League", is a Christian community that has public confession of sins and operates businesses to support the group and to propagate the gospel. What most distinguishes this group is their very articulate Biblical exegesis on the doctrine of the church using what they call the logic of spirituality.

Seventh Day Adventist related house churches probably make up the largest number of house churches that can be identified in South China. In my recent

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book on house churches published by the W.C.C., I reported on one house church of the SDA tradition that is in contact with over 400 other SDA groups in three southern provinces. In addition to the above groups there are a number of house churches that have come together in miraculous ways but are not identifiable with any particular denomination or other known movement.

Most of the house churches stopped meeting during the Cultural Revolution though Korean minority house church groups continued to meet in Northern China. Also a few Christian groups in mining towns were able to negotiate with the Red Guards for permission to continue to meet.

Let me move on to describe the situation of Christians since 1978. You are familiar with the Three Self Movement (self-government, self-support and self-propagation.) The term itself goes back to 1920 when the National Council of Churches in China proposed a plan for the autonomy of the church in China. Though the TSM did not move beyond the slogan stage in the 1920s, it was revised during the Korean war to become the Patriotic Three Self Movement Against the Americans for the Support of our Korean Brothers. The Patriotic Three-Self Movement (PTSM) was the organization that the state recognized as representing the Christian movement in China just as the government recognized specific Buddhist, Islamic, and Taoist groups.

During the Cultural Revolution the PTSM, along with other Christian groups, was suppressed--a suppression that included intellectual and religious organizations. When the moderates came to power in 1978, the PTSM was also revitalized and in 1980 the China Christian Council was formed.

The PTSM is made up of various Christians whose purpose is to promote patriotism among Christians while the China Christian Council is made up of a fellowship of local Christian congregations.

At its first meeting in 1980 the China Christian Council made three requests:

- 1) that more churches be opened as quickly as possible,
- 2) that more Bibles and hymnals be printed, and
- 3) that house churches be officially recognized as legitimate Christian groups.

In the latter part of 1980 the house churches gained legal status which meant the local party cadre would not say that those meetings were illegal gatherings.

Though there are over 560 public churches holding regular worship services in most of the medium and large cities, most Christians still worship in homes. Some of the reasons for worship in homes are: 1) there are not enough churches for all of the Christians, particularly in rural areas; 2) the transportation system is inadequate so old people are unable to go a great distance for worship; 3) there is suspicion of the new government policy; and 4) there is suspicion of some of the leadership of the Patriotic Three Self Movement. (I don't want to overemphasize this point because in most countries Christian leaders are not accepted 100% by other Christians!)

While there is a general feeling of indifference on the part of many toward PTSM there are also examples of good relations. In Hangzhou there is a public church with eight pastors that has about 2,000 attending three worship services on Sunday. Each pastor is related to a cluster of house churches in the surrounding villages offering pastoral help and teaching resources to the house churches.

The only seminary on the graduate level in Nanjing produces a correspondence course with a circulation of about 36,000, the bulk of which goes to lay leaders in house churches.

But there are also many house churches that are very anti-PTSM. What is the authentic Bible is a problem both for the house churches and the leadership of the Patriotic Three Self Movement. Part of the reason is that many who became Christians during the Cultural Revolution have no sound understanding of the Christian faith, so the question of what is the authentic Bible is important. Most of them do not have copies of the whole Bible. When they get different translations and portions from outside China there is division among

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them over the authentic version of the Bible.

In an effort to deal with the confusion caused by the varying translations, the China Christian Council is trying to secure wide circulation of the pre-liberation Union Bible. (1,200,000 copies will be published this year.) One of the reasons for the plea that outsiders not support Bible smuggling and send different translations to China is to reduce this divisiveness.

Letters went out from China about six months ago reporting that leaders of the PTSM and police beat up some members of a house church. Persons went, unofficially, from Hong Kong to investigate and I share the information from that report.

A group of Christians had been meeting near Hangzhou for about eight years. Two years ago a small number claimed that they were the true "Local Church"--a technical term used to identify the branch related to a Little Flock group with a strong following on Taiwan and in California. Violence broke out between the two factions of the house church group and the moderates asked for mediation from the PTSM group in Hangzhou. When the mediators came, violence again erupted--violence that included PTSM representatives, the police and the local house church group. It was this event which was widely reported in Europe and North America causing much anxiety. Unfortunately, there is not any additional information at this time.

It is obvious that the house church movement in China is a mixed situation with problems but we affirm it since it is the way the church survived in that society. Much joy in fellowship, much faithfulness is seen in the house churches. On the other hand there is fighting and jealousy in some places. Superstition is seen in some rural areas. Yet the house church people are saying to the world, "We are Christians. Our continued existence is by the Grace of God."

Some say that the house church and the public church are really two separate churches. My study does not support this.

There is one church in China.

Obviously there are a variety of spiritualities and a variety of theologies in China. However both the house, churches and the public churches agree on two important principles.

Both the house church and the public churches are patriotic with patriotism interpreted as supporting the socialist form of government. In the Little Brother house church where trouble was reported near Hangzhou, the conservative group wrote the prime minister of China emphasizing their patriotism.

The second principle of agreement is that both the house churches and the public churches support the aims of the Three Self-Movement, i.e. self-government, self-support, and self-propagation.

We are thankful for what God is doing in the one Protestant church in China. #

John Reagan

WCC PRE-ASSEMBLY GATHERING A Visit to South Korea

(The following is a report on a pre-assembly visit (Oct. 18-23) to Korea sponsored by the World Council of Churches in preparation for the WCC assembly to be held in Vancouver, Canada, July-August, 1983.)

The Korea program for the team was arranged by the National Council of Churches in Korea. From the airport I went immediately to attend the NCC-K Executive meeting. During our time in Korea we met with church leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, the Korean Methodist Church, the Council of Bishops of the Korean Methodist Church and Hankuk Theological Seminary. Our purpose was to be listeners in preparation for the WCC assembly next year.

Not one Korean woman participated in any of these meetings. I had to take the initiative to make contact with women I had met previously, to talk with them over the telephone or meet with them late at night after my official schedule

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was over. At our request we met with them late at night after my official schedule was over. At our request we met with political detainees' families, the women workers at Yong Dong Po Urban Industrial Mission (UIM), and the Korean Student Christian Federation. We also had a chance to visit the Institute for the Study of Justice and Development. One night we were the guests of the Korean Government's Bureau of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Culture and Information.

As we visited church leaders the following four questions were in my mind: (1) Why does the number of Christians grow so fast in Korea? (2) What is the role of the church in today's society? (3) What is the church's position on re-unification of the land and the people? (4) What is the relationship between nationalism and Christianity?

Meeting with people and visiting various places gave me the strong impression that the political division of the people and land has caused and in many ways deepened the contrasts of light and shadow in modern life. Although our experiences were limited to Seoul, the contrasts were very apparent. Seoul was crowded with eight million people (1/4 of the population) and the traffic was so heavy that our car was often stuck in traffic. The heat of industrialization could be felt by listening to the traffic sounds and the endless activity which seemed to continue all night.

Care and concern for people seemed to be overshadowed by pride stemming from increased church membership. What I observed during six days in Korea can be summarized by contrasting various experiences.

Worship Service

We attended the second of two services Wednesday night at the Young-Nak Presbyterian Church. When we got to the church, the parking lot was already filled with cars. The English material indicated that they have a membership of 50,000 with 19 ministers, seven Sunday worship services, and several educational programs. The

congregation seemed to enjoy the hymn singing and the sermon. The main role of the church seemed to be to provide a refuge for troubled people. What impressed me was that there were many well dressed young people who were proud to be members of the church.

Contrasted to this was attendance at the Thursday Prayer Service for the political detainee's families and their supporters in the chapel at the Christian Center. The WCC team were introduced to the 130 people in that ecumenical fellowship. The Rev. KIM Dong Won, of Inchon, UIM General Secretary preached. Through hymn singing and prayer all participants shared experiences and received mutual encouragement for life together as they carried this common burden of concern for oppressed people.

Institutions

The Methodist Theological School and the seminaries of the two Presbyterian Churches are all located in beautiful environs. The Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary is growing especially fast in facilities and student body. However, this church, which has the largest membership in Korea, still refuses to ordain women as pastors or allow them to be church elders. A Third World Church Leadership Center has been started by this denomination.

By way of contrast we visited the Ecumenical Institute for Mission Education which was initiated in 1975 by the approval of the 60th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea. This institute was started by professors discharged for political reasons in order to allow students expelled, also for political reasons, to continue their theological studies. The two year, four semester program was organized to include Roman Catholics. More than 100 people were crowded into the evening programs. Eighty per cent of the students have experienced confinement in prison. Twenty of the graduates have passed the PROK pastors examination. This institute also provides graduate courses in ecumenical mission as well as lay training courses.

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Part of the funds for building the new Yong Dong Po Urban Industrial Mission Center were provided by the Young-Nak Presbyterian Church. But when the UIM became a target of government criticism because of its support of the human rights struggle of the Woon Poon Labor Union workers against the company's inhumane treatment, support from the church declined.

Food and Housing

The month of October was beautiful; the colorful fruit and the abundant harvest overflowed into the streets and markets. Government officials treated us to traditional foods and highly refined dance and music at the luxurious Korea House.

At the same time the families of political detainees started a hunger strike in the Human Rights Committee Room of the Christian Center, protesting to the Minister of Justice and the death of Mr. Park Kwan Hyun. They demanded a thorough investigation calling into serious question the misinformation reported in the newspapers. About 30 women were in a small room sitting together sharing the warmth of others as the creeping shadow of the early darkness of autumn stole into the room so quickly.

From the hotel room window we could see small, old houses in the ravines between tall buildings being torn down for removal. About 60 women workers of the Woon Poon Textile Company were sleeping in the basement of the Yong Dong Po UIM, struggling to maintain a democratic union.

The Economic Situation

The preparations for the 1988 Olympic games have stimulated economic activity, with construction booming everywhere. The city was decorated with Korean flags alongside Indonesian flags. Newspaper headlines reported successful negotiations arranging for Indonesia to supply Korea with liquid petroleum gas. One English newspaper article described the present economic situation as "choked to death in a sea of foreign debt," but another Korean language newspaper editorial attacked the work of the UIM, claiming it uses

the strategy of the international communist movement to control labor unions. The article said the UIM was the cause of the present economic crisis which the government is attempting to overcome. The Control Data and Woon Poon textile company bankruptcies, the editorial claims, were all caused by the UIM. The editorial called for further labor management conflict investigations while pointing out UIM wrongs.

A student gave expression to two kinds of oppression: one is external, in which the present government has become the slave of foreign powers and the other being internal, in which the majority of the people do not receive justice. Little freedom of the press is apparent as evidenced by reading a few of the daily newspapers. Individual voices cried out for economic justice and democracy without foreign domination.

Church Growth

The reasons given for the church growth also provided contrasts. A president of a theological seminary indicated that people are more religious in Korea and that pastoral care is needed everywhere. Shamanism is not organized in the same way that Shintoism is in Japan. There are no strong traditional religions: thus, the evangelical and charismatic movements are rapidly growing.

Contrasted with this, some people indicated that Korea has a long history of resignation among the people. Intellectuals and students are not interested in a church which takes the side of government. Some praised the church's contribution to social development and others indicated that while in the past certain sectors have been agents of social change, this is no longer true. A church leader stated that the teachings of the Gospel have yet to become acts of love, and emphasized the necessity of qualitative growth in the church. One responded that pastors are respected, and the job gives security, and Korean youth are willing to go into evangelistic work in order to stop communism. Some see

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the role of the church as identifying with the oppressed and some youth have gone into the factories. One young person decried the dehumanizing working conditions and hoped that the aims of the Woon Poon Textile union workers' labor struggle could be shared with other young people.

Political Re-Unification

The re-unification of North and South Korea has been discussed on theoretical level. Some emphasized that the country will never be liberated unless all foreign occupation forces leave the country and that the problem should be solved by the Koreans themselves. But pro-communist and anti-American sentiments are severely suppressed so that many students are still in prison for violations of the anti-communist laws. The mothers of those who were charged with the bombing of the US cultural center in the Kwangju incident said that their offspring had received death sentences. Also the person charged with disturbing the "Miss International Contest" is now serving a ten year sentence.

The National Flag

After 36 years of Japan's colonial rule on the Korean peninsula, the Korean national flag should bring joy to the heart of the people. The flag was seen in many places, including the theological seminaries, Yong Dong Po UIM chapel, and other churches. At 6 p.m. the national anthem from loud speakers echoed between buildings and people walking on streets stood at attention until the flag was brought down. For some the flag is a symbol of national pride, and for a theological seminary professor the flag is a symbol of the awakening of the people of God. For some people the flag symbolized the anti-communist movement, but a few sensed the oppressive potential in the national flag and its uses in the control of the people's freedom. I fear a time may be coming when these contrasts in the land may be totally neutralized under the oppression of the national flag.

Within these contrasts and contradictions in society there is the constant struggle of each individual for life and humanity. Truly Christians must be awakened to fulfilling the promises

and seeing the sign of hope in the midst of these contradictions.

Aiko Carter,
The WCC Sub-Regional
Meeting, Oiso Academy
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PROSTITUTION, SOCIO-ECONOMIC ISSUES AND OKINAWA

Discussion of prostitution usually focuses on the morality of prostitution rather than socio-economic issues. In looking at Asian sex tours and Okinawa our concern here will also be socio-economic.

Beginning in 1970 sex tours by Japanese males to Taiwan, South Korea, and other South Asian countries received wide media attention. These sex tours provide the services of prostitutes and in so doing take advantage of the economic gap between Japan and other Asian countries. The sex tours sponsored as rewards for employees encourage and strengthen the condescending attitudes held by many Japanese men toward other Asian countries.

After the Satsuma Clan got control of Okinawa in 1609, the burden of taxes became so heavy that daughters were frequently sold into prostitution to raise cash to pay taxes. Further, in 1672 an area for legalized prostitution was established for "diplomatic reasons" to entertain Chinese merchants and the ruling class of Satsuma. This area for legalized prostitution continued under the Meiji government. One sixth of the total tax income in the Naha District was from prostitution, according to tax documents.

When World War II ended, the U.S. military bases exerted a large degree of control over the economy and were of overwhelming importance in producing the social ferment of the expanding prostitution industry. During the early years of the 27 years of the U.S. occupation, the number of prostitutes increased with the increase in the number of military personnel on

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Okinawa. To a large extent, the Okinawan post-war economy was supported by the earnings of those women.

When Okinawa was returned to Japanese administration by the U.S. in 1972, an official report indicated that 7,400 women were registered as prostitutes. It is generally recognized that the actual number of prostitutes was much higher. In a book on Okinawan industry by Shimabukuro the following point was made:

"If 7,000 women each earned \$20.00 each night, the income would be about \$50,400,000 for the year. This amount is more than the \$43,500,000 produced in 1970 by the sugar cane industry, the largest industry in Okinawa at that time."

During the 27 years of U.S. occupation neither the provisions of Japan's prostitution prevention law nor the constitutional guarantee of basic human rights were operative on Okinawa.

In order to stimulate the economy of Okinawa the International Ocean Exposition was held in 1975. Much of the economic return did not stay in Okinawa but went to corporate headquarters in Tokyo. In addition, to attract visitors to the Expo, prostitution services increased with many women coming from outside Okinawa. Some women had to sell their bodies in order to repay debts incurred in preparation for Expo.

The present Okinawan economy depends on 2,000,000 tourists each year--resulting in additional problems. For example, 90% of the women employed in one "entertainment district" head single parent families.

Sex tours, be they to South Asia or Okinawa, are part of our consumer economy. Seeming to believe that anything can be bought with money, Japanese men are demanding the slavery of women to satisfy their desires. In our consumer economy, where work opportunities for women are limited, women who sell their bodies for money are rated more highly economically than other women workers with lower

income.

The prostitution issue is not just a woman's issue, nor is it just a moral issue for the churches near centers of prostitution. It is an issue related to the sufferings and agony of many women that has been a challenge to the church throughout its history. #

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Nishihara Kyodan Church Member
(Summary translation from Fukuin
to Sekai, 10/82. By AYC)

TAIWANESE WOMEN VISIT JAPAN

Eight women from central and southern Taiwan, members of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, visited Japan from October 14 to November 13. They were returning a visit of Japanese Christians who went to Taiwan last November to attend the Eighth Ecumenical Mission Conference at Tainan Theological Seminary.

Their schedule included parts of northern Japan, the Kanto area, and the Osaka area.

In the Aizu District they met with two different women's groups, shared in a tea ceremony, and gave their witness in nine different churches on Saturday and Sunday.

One example of the witness of Taiwanese Christians that the women told was the story of the Lyim family in Taipei. Lawyer LYIM Gi-hyiong, age 38, a member of the Taiwan Provincial Assembly, was arrested on Dec. 13, 1977, in connection with the Kaohsiung incident, and was sentenced to twelve years in prison. The following Feb. 27 Mr. Lyim's widowed mother was allowed to visit her son in prison for the first time. The next day she and her six year old twin granddaughters were murdered in their home. An eight year old granddaughter miraculously survived, though stabbed six times.

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Since the murders Ms. LI Le-tin, wife of the Rev. KAO Chun-byeng, the imprisoned General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, and several young pastors provided pastoral care to the stricken family, who were not Christians. On the first anniversary of the death of her daughters and mother-in-law, Mrs. Lyim asked that a Christian memorial service be held for them. Prof. TIN John Jyigiokk of the Tainan Theological Seminary was the speaker. Mrs. Lyim has since found her way out of despair and has found comfort and new courage from God.

The Lyims decided to give their home to be a church, which is now the Gikong (Light of Justice) Presbyterian Church. Prof. Tin and others continue to give pastoral care to the members of this church.

The courage of the members of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan in the face of government pressure and harassment is particularly impressive.

Learning about the church growth goals set by the Taiwanese Church was very instructive. In 1954 the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan launched a ten-year plan to double its strength. The number of churches and the membership doubled during that time. At present there is a "One-tenth Movement," which aims to increase membership by 10% each year.

The Taiwanese Christian women in their testimonies told of God's work in the life of individuals and indicated the importance placed on planned Bible reading, tithing, and fasting in the Taiwanese Church. #

Armin H. Kroehler

KYODAN GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETS

The 22nd General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) met at Hakone Nov. 16-18 and was attended by approximately 500 delegates, observers, and guests.

Rev. USHIROKU Toshio, Moderator, Rev. KISHIMOTO Yoichi, Vice-Moderator, Rev. TSUJI Ken, Secretary and Rev. NAKAJIMA

Masaaki, General Secretary, were all re-elected.

Though the failure of the Tokyo District to meet for over ten years is a continuing, serious problem, "stability" well describes the meeting of the general assembly. Yet stability does not mean stagnation since forward movement is obvious. The deficit is being decreased and advance in several areas was seen.

An agreement of mutual recognition of the ministry and plans for joint mission with the Korean Christian Church in Japan (KCCJ) is an example of advance.

During World War II the Korean Christian church was made a part of the Kyodan though the use of the Korean language was not recognized. Ordained Korean clergy had to take a re-examination in the Kyodan.

After W.W. II the KCCJ sent a courteous letter of greeting when it left the Kyodan to reorganize but the Kyodan did not respond.

The Kyodan later reached agreements with three denominations in Korea, but did not attempt to improve relations with the KCCJ.

The agreement between the KCCJ and the Kyodan included mutual recognition of the sacraments and ministry. Cooperation in the mission and work for human rights for Koreans in Japan will be undertaken. Also the assembly voted to raise a 100 million yen offering for the KCCJ over a ten year period starting in 1984. General Secretary KIM Kun Shik of the KCCJ said in appreciation that the Korean Church in Japan had never before experienced such an expression of concern and love by the Kyodan.

The second important decision of the Assembly was to approve the re-evaluation of the union of the Kyodan and the United Church of Christ in Okinawa. The newly elected executive committee was given the task of re-evaluation.

SHOJI Tsutomu